9:Iyer E-4, 5 (ca. 1902-1906) 1912
AWll Kerala AWll
Nayar



# CHAPTER V.

# THE SUDRAS OF COCHIN.

## A. THE HIGH CASTE SUDRAS (NAYARS)

*(Continued).*

Occupation.

Among the high caste Nayars, the recognition of caste by occupation is not possible. They were at one time a military caste, and as a relic of it, the small force of infantry maintained by the State is still known by the name of the ancient military caste of Kerala. Aristocratic military leaders of the feudal ages, who then derived their incomes chiefly from landed property, in these times of uninterrupted peace and tranquillity, are but shadows of their former state. Some of them are almost penniless, and while a few families maintain their ancient position, most of them have lost prestige and influence. Among the lower classes of Nayars, there are sub-castes who by occupation were potters, weavers, oil-mongers, and copper-smiths; but the men of these sub-castes have abandoned their traditional occupations, and even consider it a disgrace to be known by their original occupation. This is partly due to the acquisition of wealth by a number of the caste-men, and partly to their attempts to rise in the social scale by engaging themselves in other walks of life. There are again some classes (*Illakkâra* or *Sudras*) of Nayars who rendered personal services to the Nambuthiris or to their own community, and the tendency has been to discontinue the services and take to other more respectable calling.

The Nayars numbered 1,11,837 at the last Census, and of these, 28,786 are agriculturists. These include tenant farmers, agricultural labourers, growers of special products and those connected with agricultural training and forests. Very few take to manufacture and trade. The sentiments generated by the old feudalism, a rigid conservatism of caste and their residence in rural areas account for it to a great extent.